

## **There is not much I can do with him, but I will surely keep away from him**

It was 7:45 in the morning of Wednesday 7th of July 2010 as I was traveling to the Salfeet district to do my fieldwork as usual as a trainer for empowering Palestinian women, and I was carrying my personal computer in my hand.

I have to use two means of public transportation to reach Salfeet. I left the first car and started walking towards the next station. I had to walk for about 7 minutes towards Za'atra Junction (Taphoh) where there are four bus stations. However, they serve only Jewish settlers. Palestinians of course are not allowed to use them so they wait there for Palestinian public transportation there. In the same place there is also a central checkpoint, including military watching tower, and frequent movement of settlers and army. In addition, in the same place the settlers built a kiosk for selling sandwiches and coffee to travelers. Indeed it is a center of many Palestinian towns and villages around. Palestinian travelers always feel in this place an inconvenience due to continued assaults by the settlers, despite the existence of the central checkpoint in this place. But this checkpoint was established a long time ago to check Palestinians who travel every day to Nablus, Ramallah, Salfeet, the Jordan Valley areas and Palestinian workers who want to travel to work in Tel Aviv.

So I was walking in the middle of this place crossing the main street when I noticed a young Jewish settler walking in the opposite direction. He was coming gradually closer to me...

I realized that he was planning something in his mind. I felt that I became a target so I began to be cautious. I was walking and looking in his eyes his eyes and observing his gestures.

As the distance between us minimized to a meter or less he jumped suddenly and knocked very strongly the computer in my hand again and again until it was completely damaged.

The settler continued to walk laughing loudly. Nearby in the bus station there were about 10 additional Jewish settlers among them women and children. A soldier was sitting in the watchtower only about 15 meters away from the incident and had seen it fully.

I felt shocked and insulted. My first reaction was to look over the settlers who were in the bus station to see their reaction. I was surprised to see that many of them were laughing, supporting the act of the settler.

This was a very strange and very inhumane reaction...

This violent act against a Palestinian pleased the settlers. Their message was very clear -- (this place is ours and you as an Arab are unwanted. Leave the place --- otherwise we will punish you as we like).

Despite the humiliation I kept my calm. But then one of them said "dirty Arab, dirty Arab". It is then that I lost my calm and asked the settler "why did you do this to me? I was passing peacefully and you harmed me". But he said the same words "dirty Arab ... go away".

I moved more closely to the settler and said: "I never violated human principles and moral values which my parents passed to me. I am scared neither of you nor of all the other settlers. But I want to tell you that your behavior is striped from morality and humanity and your conscience should punish you sooner or later".

He was very disturbed but laughed in sarcastic way. I left him and went to the soldier who was standing in the watching tower. I said "Hi. You saw what that settler did to my dignity and my computer?" He said "nothing"... I felt that he did not want to acknowledge what the settler had done to me. I asked him "Can I talk to the officer of the checkpoint?" He called him and I explained what had happened to me in details. The officer asked me to wait and he went to communicate with his commanders as I expected.

Fifteen minutes later, he came back with a strange response. He said, "I cannot do much to him. Just keep away from him". I think that such answer implies absolute disinterest and I was very disappointed by this response. I said to the officer "how will you react if the settlers start to attack civilian people who pass this place every day?" He said, "we will tell them to stop" but I felt that he would like to say, "I wish that I could punish the settler". I said "wish you good day" and I left humiliated. I continued my walk to the work and started a dialogue with myself about what happened between the settlers and me. I asked myself "why he did this to me..? What pushed him to say "dirty Arab"?" From where did he get all this extreme hostility and arrogant attitude? Why the settlers laughed in that provocative way?

My own analyses to this behavior can be placed in bigger context, which is the political, cultural and religious conflict between Arab and Israelis, and at the end I reached the conclusion that the continuation of the current oppression and status quo effectively means that the peace is unreachable with these extreme hostile settlers.

I turn to you all Israelis peace activists, human rights defenders and those who believe in human dignity in general. I am calling you to provide a different answer that the one provided by the officer. You have to stop the brutality and continued damage to your reputation. I believe deeply that your absence and silence can lead to more suffering for innocent people and could be a source of more tension in Palestinian – Israeli relations.

In addition, I am turning to the International Community to make all possible efforts to dismantle the settlements. This should be the highest priority on the International Agenda because the daily lives of the Palestinians are affected by the occupation and oppression.

I am sure that the public opinion among the grass-roots activists in Palestine and Israel would like very much to live in peace and mutual respect and only because of my profound and lasting belief in peace that I am writing to you. We all must make efforts to reach peace and prosperity.

Best,

Abed Khalil

Empowerment trainer and peace activist  
[abed2003a@hotmail.com](mailto:abed2003a@hotmail.com)